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Joe Einertson '14 participates in nationwide computing competition

Summary: Computer science major, Joe Einertson was among first 60 entrants to complete Part 2 of the IBM Mainframe Contest

(March 23, 2012)-Computer science major, Joe Einertson '14, Brooklyn Park, recently competed in the seventh annual IBM Master the Mainframe Contest. The 2011 IBM Master the Mainframe Contest drew 3,936 high school, college, and university students from across the United States and Canada, making it the highest attended contest to date. This fantastic turnout combined with difficult challenges also made it the toughest contest yet.

The contest was divided into three parts: Part 1—Breaking the Ice, Part 2—Practical Experience, and Part 3—Real-World Challenge. Part 1 was an introduction to navigating the mainframe user interface and basic mainframe concepts. In Part 2 contestants used skills developed in Part 1 to perform more extensive systems programming and application development tasks. Part 3 included tasks taken from real-life situations encountered by experienced systems programmers and challenges designed to identify contestants with the most drive and determination.

Part 1 was easy for Einertson it took him no more than two hours to complete. However, a more challenging Part 2 took him 8-10 hours to complete. Because mainframe programming is such a tiny part of the current computer science landscape, Einertson sometimes had difficulty figuring out how to do what was required in the competition. “Google didn’t know anything. It basically came down to guess and check sometimes,” he said.

Einertson was among the first 60 entrants to complete Part 2 with 100% accuracy. By doing so, he earned \$100.00, a certificate from IBM, and an invitation to upload his resume to the IBM Student Opportunity System.

Einertson first heard about the competition when Kristin Kaster Lamberty, assistant professor of computer science, sent an email to the campus Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) list. While he doesn’t plan on working with mainframes in the future, he said, “It was interesting to learn about a kind of arcane side of computer science that most people don’t even know exists.”

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